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THE GULL



GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER VOL. 89 NO. 8 OCTOBER 2003

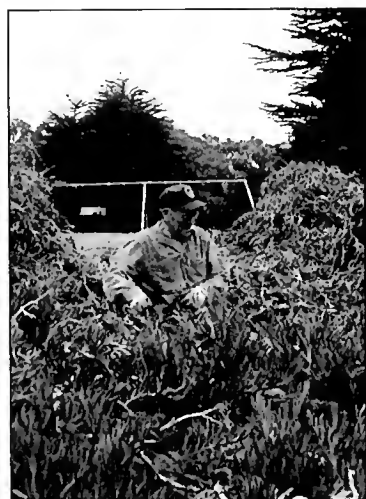
FOUNDED 1917

Saving Quail One Plant at a Time

On November 15, Golden Gate Audubon Society volunteers will roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty for one of San Francisco's most charismatic—and most threatened—avian residents. GGAS will be hosting its first-ever Save the Quail “Restore-A-Thon”—a creative effort to restore quail habitat and raise funds to support GGAS' ongoing efforts to rehabilitate the rapidly declining birds in the City.

California Quail were once abundant in San Francisco's parks, with an estimated 1,500 birds or more inhabiting Golden Gate Park around the turn of the century. In 1902, Florence M. Bailey wrote in *The Handbook of Birds of the Western United States*, “The brushy parts of the Golden Gate park in San Francisco abound with quail, and from the benches one can watch the squads of plump hen-like creatures as they move about with a stately tread or stand talking sociably in low monosyllables.”

But today, these sociable gatherings and low calls are a rare occurrence, even in the wide open spaces of Golden Gate Park. The quail population in Golden Gate Park is on the verge of extinction, and the total population in San Francisco is less than



Over the past month, Don Heyneman has meticulously cleared the entire three-acre Quail Commons site of poison hemlock.

Save the Date to Save the Quail

Join us for our first-ever “Quail Restore-A-Thon” on Sat., November 15 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. See page 11 for more information and a Restore-A-Thon registration form.

Alan Hopkins

100 birds. The primary reason for the quail's decline is the loss of quality habitat. Over the years, the plants quail depend on for food and nesting have been displaced by dense, weedy species that are not suitable habitat, leaving the quail vulnerable to predators.

GGAS launched its Save the Quail campaign in 1998 to restore San Francisco's declining California Quail populations. Since then, we have succeeded in restoring quail habitat and raising awareness about the threats quail face—and even winning the quail the honorable title of official bird of San Francisco.

SAVING QUAIL, continued on page 9

Ferry Tales Can Come True

Boats and birds: What better way to view and enjoy our wonderful San Francisco Bay wildlife than on a ferryboat? But when a new ferry system was proposed on the Bay, with hundreds of ferries criss-crossing everywhere, Golden Gate Audubon Society and other local conservation groups recognized that too much of this good thing could be a problem.

The Water Transit Authority (WTA) was established in 2000 by state legislation to develop and implement a plan for an improved ferry system on San Francisco Bay. The WTA proposed creating the largest ferry service in the world on San Francisco Bay, with dozens of ferries crossing every 15 minutes. But extensive ferry traffic threatens a significant impact on our Bay's waterbirds and could make much of the Bay unusable for them.

San Francisco Bay provides critical feeding and resting habitat for thousands of migratory birds each year. Some species use the Bay as a recharging stopover during migration, feeding nonstop to restore their energy reserves quickly in order to complete their migratory journey. Others spend the winter on the Bay, feeding and storing up energy to enable them to breed successfully in Canada and Alaska during the intense Arctic summer.

Waterfowl often feed and rest in groups of many thousands. Resting (called “roosting” by biologists) is critical to reproduction, as it allows

FERRY TALES, continued on page 12

INSIDE

2 Embracing Your
Inner Activist

5 Programs

6 Field Trips

10 Backyard
Birder





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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society membership is \$20 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. Monthly meeting: second Friday in the West Bay; third Thursday in the East Bay, 7:00 p.m.

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Embracing Your Inner Activist

Activism and environmentalism go hand in hand. The environmental movement was born of visionaries who believed that individual action could make a difference. Their actions have led to the creation of several environmental protection laws and the establishment of myriad citizens' groups that work to protect the environment every day. It is a long and proud history. Today, however, opponents of environmental protection refer to "activists" in a derogatory way.

As environmental advocates, we need to reject this negative connotation. Activism isn't a dirty word.

An activist is anyone who *takes action* to further a cause. Environmental activists can be people who visit or write policymakers to lobby directly for change. They can also be working people who give their Saturdays to pull invasive weeds from wetlands or pick up trash on beaches; they can be volunteers who take schoolchildren on field trips to discover the outdoor world or who answer phones and stuff envelopes. These actions may not all make headlines, but they do make a significant difference for the environment—and each is critically important.



Amiko Mayeno

During the years I worked in Washington, D.C., my job was to engage activists in national endangered species protection. But as part of a national organization, the opportunities to engage and promote activism were—ironically—limited. I usually met activists face to face only when they traveled to Washington to lobby their representatives, and I had rare opportunities to work with them "on the ground."

At Golden Gate Audubon Society, we have no such limitations. Just look through this issue of *The Gull*, and you'll see what I mean. Allan Ridley, well known to many of you through his service as a GGAS Board member, Strybing Arboretum trip leader and environmental educator, is one of our featured stars. You can also read about our Save the Quail campaign and upcoming Quail Restore-a-Thon. Spearheaded by long-time volunteer Alan Hopkins and GGAS staff, this is a wonderful opportunity for volunteer activists to make a tangible difference, helping the California Quail make a come-back from near extinction in San Francisco.

Today, when I see everything that GGAS volunteers are doing, I am inspired by their passion, commitment and plain hard work. Because of GGAS member actions, we can point to revitalized and protected places around the Bay Area—from the Whittell Marsh in Richmond to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Shoreline in Oakland, from the Alameda Wildlife Refuge to Heron's Head Park and Pier 94 in San Francisco—and we can see the excitement on children's faces when they identify a California Least Tern or a Clapper Rail.

I hope this issue of *The Gull* inspires you to consider the power of what we can achieve together—and to expand your own level of involvement. Perhaps you'll want to become an Armchair Activist, join one of our bird census projects, or sign up for the Quail Restore-a-Thon as a sponsor or volunteer. Perhaps you'll bring a friend or two with you.

GGAS offers so many opportunities to be an activist. This is part of what makes us unique. Whatever action you take—even if it doesn't make the headlines—I assure you that your efforts are needed. And together, we can make a difference in protecting and enjoying the wildlife and wild places we love.

by Elizabeth Murdock
 Executive Director

Birdwatching in Panamá in March 2004

At the tropical junction between two continents, we can find a broad range of species in a number of habitats. Join GGAS past president Steve Margolin on an eight-day birding trip to Panamá in March 2004, where GGAS will explore the variety of Panamá's biodiversity.

The first part of the trip will focus on the central lowland forest around the Panama Canal. Participants will spend four nights at the Canopy Tower in Soberanía National Park, overlooking the Canal. Canopy Tower offers tree-top views of tropical birds and mammals (both two-toed and three-toed sloths were seen just yards away on our last visit), easy access to the Canal Area birding hotspots and fine accommodations and meals. Some of the noted birding areas we will explore are Radar Hill Road and Plantation Road, the famous Pipeline Road and Parque Natural Metropolitano in Panama City.

The second part of the trip will take us to

the mountainous western region of Chiriquí in search of the Resplendent Quetzal and the many other interesting species of the region. Our base there will be the Los Quetzales hotel, ideally located for exploring the forests of La Amistad International Park.

Our guides in Panamá will be skilled and experienced birders from Panama Audubon Society. The group will be limited to 12 participants. We hope to enjoy the birds we encounter in diverse tropical habitats, rather than targeting particular species.

How to Sign Up

For more information, contact Steve Margolin at 530.342.6476. For more information about GGAS projects in Panamá, visit the Latin America Committee page of the GGAS Web



Searching for the Resplendent Quetzal in La Amistad International Park, Chiriquí, Panama, in March 1999.

site at www.goldengateaudubon.org.

Note: This trip is in the early planning stages, with a tentative departure date of March 15th, and the itinerary described may change as planning proceeds.

Burrowing Owl Symposium

A two-day California Burrowing Owl Symposium will be held Tuesday and Wednesday, November 11 and 12, 2003, at the Radisson Hotel in Sacramento. Sponsored by the Western Section of the Wildlife Society and Albion Environmental, Inc., the symposium will feature presentations and panel discussions on California Burrowing Owl research, management, status, regulation and policy. Researchers, conservationists, resource managers, representatives of resource agencies and others interested in Burrowing Owl conservation will share their information.

Registration and general symposium information is available on the Western Section's Web site at www.tws-west.org or by contacting Barbara Rocco, Executive Director of the Western Section of The Wildlife Society at lobolady23@aol.com.

Birding Symposium

The Central Valley Bird Club will be hosting the Seventh Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium from November 20–23, 2003, at the Radisson Hotel in Stockton. There will be field trips, workshops, a Birding Nature Fair and Art Show with over 25 vendors selling various nature related items. Jon Dunn will be giving a Sparrow Identification workshop, Steve Howell a Hummingbird Identification workshop, and Kimball Garrett will tell us "Why Birders Should Care About Subspecies." The Keynote Speakers are: Ed Harper ("A Passion for Birds"), Keith Hansen ("The Farallons") and John Hendrickson ("California Raptors").

Registration and general symposium information are available online at <http://cvbs.org> or by contacting Frances Oliver at 209.369.2010.

Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education and birding activities!

Peregrine Falcon (\$500 to \$1000)

Frank & Janice Delfino (FAWR)

Clapper Rail (\$100 to \$200)

Robert & Barbara Brandriff, Kevin Consey, Richard W. Ross*, Sheila Wood

Gifts (to \$100)

Anonymous, Henry & Myrtle Adams, Brenda Jean Bailer, Linda Carruth Bradford*, Suzanne Conrad, Pauline L. Fong, Jim & Ruth Gravanis, Penn Hughes, Janet Jacobsen*, Stephen Linsley, John & Marilyn Muenchow, Jennifer & Anna Myers, Julie & Frank Nelson, Ms. Ginette Polak, Kristine Poplawski*, Laurel Robinson, Lawrence L. Schmelzer, Douglas M. Sherk, Alan & Patricia Smith, Lynn M. Strandberg, David Young & Donald Bird*

In Honor of

Audre & Roger Newman's Birthdays:
Tony Loverde (Oakland Education)

In Memory of

Winefred Healy: Leon Hurbain & Virginia Kaiser (FAWR)
William Rentz: Lucy & Sherman Maisel

* With GGAS Supporting Membership

Allan Ridley: A Natural Teacher

Anyone who's been on early Sunday morning birding walks in Strybing Arboretum with GGAS board member Allan Ridley recognizes the quiet passion, extensive knowledge and innate teaching ability of this lifelong naturalist.

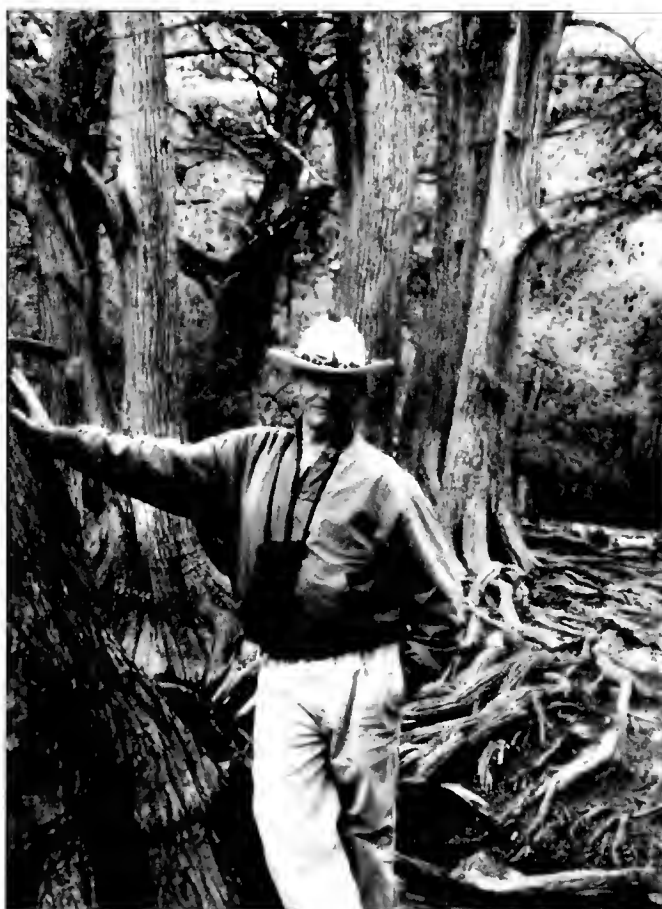
Allan has been introducing people, especially young people, to birds and wildlife nearly as long as he can remember. It dates back to his sixth grade class in Foxboro, Massachusetts when Al Buzzewitz, director of the Massachusetts Audubon's Moose Hill Sanctuary, came to Allan's classroom and took the students out to the countryside to show them the wonders of the natural world.

"I loved it," recalls Allan. "From then on, I attended summer camp at Moose Hill Sanctuary every year, and at 14 I had my own nature center as a camp counselor, teaching nature classes to younger kids. It was the director of the Moose Hill Sanctuary who gave me the idea for the monthly bird walks at Strybing Arboretum. His monthly field trips in the Arnold Arboretum in Boston demonstrated that regularly scheduled trips in an easily accessible urban location can prove quite popular and successful in introducing people to the excitement of bird watching."

After graduating from Denison University in Ohio with a pre-med degree in zoology, Allan studied marine biology in Florida and then earned a master's degree in physiology at the University of Oregon. While on his way to earning a Ph.D. in physiology at the University of California, Berkeley, he heard about a job teaching biology at a new, small private high school in San Francisco, called the Urban School. To the subsequent benefit of several generations of students, Allan left the Ph.D. program and, for the next 30 years, developed and taught high school courses in biology, botany and ornithology at the Urban School. Although he officially retired six years ago, Allan continues to teach

a single course there in ornithology.

"Urban School has been a wonderful teaching situation," Allan says. "I was able to create courses in marine biology, urban ecology, botany and ornithology, send them for approval to U.C. Berkeley, where many of our students went on to college, and then teach them." During his teaching tenure, the Urban School grew from 35 students to 250 today.



Allan Ridley

When Allan joined the GGAS Board in 1999, he formed an Education Committee to develop a long-range plan for the GGAS environmental education programs that were already under way in Oakland, Alameda and San Francisco. He and his committee spent time observing the classroom and field trip

programs and meeting with teachers, principals and parents. The committee ultimately produced a report that strongly endorsed the programs and recommended that the GGAS Board find ways to support and continue them. Allan has proposed that GGAS develop a children's summer program in natural history, bird watching and environmental service. The summer program would charge a fee; profits would be used to fund GGAS' education programs.

Although he has traveled the world leading birding and botany trips with his biologist wife, Helen McKenna, Allan never tires of looking at common, backyard species. "Lots of birders look for the unusual, dramatic sightings," he says, "but I can get totally caught up in watching the same species time and again." Nonetheless, his keen observation skills spot bird activities that would be missed by less observant eyes. On one Strybing Arboretum trip, for example, much to everyone's amusement, he pointed out a robin stretched flat on his back in a tree, apparently taking a sunbath. "Actually," Allan explained, "he's irradiating ectoparasites."

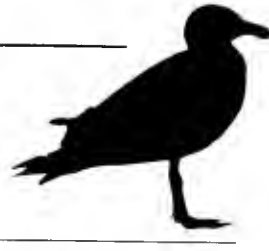
As if he can't get enough of teaching, this past year Allan began volunteering as a Zoomobile instructor at the San Francisco Zoo, taking small animals and birds to elementary school classrooms in the Bay Area. "All the kids sit on the edge of their chairs when we show them a gopher snake, a desert tortoise or a western screech owl. It's great," he says. "I am uplifted by their enthusiasm and wonder."

by Marjorie Blackwell
Publicity Chair

Have you ever attended the Sunday morning Strybing Arboretum field trips? Allan Ridley, along with co-leader Rick Ferrick and Strybing Arboretum Docents Helen McKenna and Linda Lyons, lead groups monthly through the varied micro-habitats of this urban jewel. Participants meet at 8 a.m. in front of the Arboretum for a half-day trip. Beginners and all others welcome. See what you've been missing! This month's date is on page 6.

PROGRAMS

Anne McTavish



The October membership programs promise to be interesting and entertaining. We meet socially at 7 p.m. Programs begin at 7:30 p.m. For more information about upcoming events or detailed directions to either program location, please see our web page. You may also check for updates any time on the Web page at www.goldengateaudubon.org/Chapter/programs2003-2004.htm.

San Francisco

San Francisco meetings are held in the County Fair building at Strybing Arboretum in Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way. Directions are available online at www.strybing.org/visiting/page2.html.

Friday, October 10

Eric Preston: "A Month in Antarctica"
Antarctica and the surrounding Southern Ocean are home to thousands of penguins, albatrosses, petrels, seals, whales and spectacular scenery. Intrepid birder and photographer Eric Preston spent a month on the Southern Ocean, visiting the Falkland Islands, South Georgia Island and the Antarctic Peninsula. Join him for a slide presentation of birds, seals, whales, moun-

tains and ice taken during his 26-day voyage on the sea. He will also discuss the current environmental issues affecting the southern ocean and their impact on the rest of the planet.

Eric Preston is a San Francisco resident who has been a serious birder since age 5 and photographing the natural world since he was a teenager.

Berkeley

Berkeley meetings are held at the Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin). Directions are available at www.northbrae.org/directions.html.

Thursday, October 23

Steve Margolin: "Panama: Birding, Conservation, Education"

Panama is more than an isthmus crossed by a canal. This tropical country has beautiful lowland forests and montane cloud forests, mangroves, beaches and more than 950 species of birds. GGAS past president Steve Margolin will show a video of Panama birds and ecotourist destinations, talk about GGAS field trips to Panama, and fill you in on the joint conservation and education efforts of Panama Audubon Society and GGAS' Latin America Committee.

Dine at Chevy's in Alameda and Save a Least Tern

2400 Mariner Square Drive, Alameda
510.521.3768

Chevy's restaurant in Alameda will contribute 20 percent of every purchase made at the restaurant on **Thursday, October 16, between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m.** to GGAS' Friends of the Alameda Refuge (FAWR).

To ensure the donation, you must take a FAWR flyer to the restaurant. The flyers can be downloaded from the FAWR Web site at www.fawr.org and are also available at the GGAS office. The funds will be used to support FAWR projects: endangered species protection, education, and transfer of refuge lands to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Call the GGAS office to have a flyer mailed to you, and visit www.fawr.org for more information.

New Class on Winter Land Birds of the East Bay

GGAS is offering a five-week beginning birding class that will emphasize identification of East Bay wintering land birds, building birding skills, and the pure joy of watching birds.

Classroom instruction will be on Wednesday evenings at the GGAS office from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m., from October 29 to December 3 (skipping November 26). Field trips will be on the following weekends: Saturdays, November 1, 8, 15 and 22; Sunday, December 7.

The field trips will be from 9 a.m. to about noon at various East Bay locations, including Berkeley Meadows, Tilden Regional Park, and the University of California Botanical Garden. The November 22 field trip will be an all-day excursion to a special greater Bay Area location.

The class is limited to 15 students to allow for optimum personal attention in the field. The cost is \$60 (\$50 for GGAS Supporting Members) for class and field trips; no refund for missed classes. GGAS member Lillian Fujii will be the classroom instructor. Field trips will be led by Lillian Fujii and Steve Hayashi.

How to Register

Send your check (include your phone number and e-mail) payable to **Golden Gate Audubon Society** to:

Golden Gate Audubon Society
2530 San Pablo Ave., Suite G,
Berkeley, CA 94702

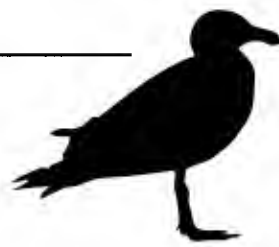
You may also enroll through VISA or Mastercard—and sign up to become a GGAS Supporting Member—by calling the GGAS office at 510.843.2222. GGAS business hours are Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Questions about the class?

Call Lillian Fujii at 510.236.4167.

FIELD TRIPS

Susan Groves




San Bruno Mountain

South San Francisco

Saturday, October 4

Leaders: Doug Allshouse;
Herb Brandt, 415.239.2711

Meet at 9 a.m. at the headquarters parking lot on Guadalupe Canyon Parkway on this half-day trip, which is a joint activity with the Friends of San Bruno Mountain. We expect to see migrating and resident birds.

[\$] to park in lot if gate is open 


Upper San Leandro Reservoir

Moraga

Saturday, October 4

Leader: Bob Lewis,
510.845.5001, Rlewis0727@aol.com

Meet at 10 a.m. in the Valle Vista Staging Area for this approximately 3-hour trip. Grassy hills, pines, oaks and open water provide varied habitats for land birds and waterfowl. Beginners welcome. Rain cancels.

Take Hwy. 24 to Orinda and exit on Moraga Hwy. Continue approx. 4 miles to Canyon Rd. Turn right at the traffic signal and continue 1.2 mi. to the Valle Vista Staging Area on the left. 

Birding for Kids at Strybing Arboretum

San Francisco

Saturdays, October 4 and November 1

San Francisco Nature Education Leaders:
Nancy DeStefanis, Angie Geiger,
Scott Walker; Strybing Arboretum Docent:
Darin Dawson

Sponsored by GGAS, Strybing Arboretum
and San Francisco Nature Education
415.876.5220, myblueherons@yahoo.com

9 – 11 a.m. Meet at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way) for this regular first Saturday of the month bird and nature hike. Ages 7 and older. Details in September *Gull*.

Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserves

Monterey County

Saturday, October 4

Leader: Rick Fournier, 831.632.2473,
www.montereybirdingadventures.com

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserves Visitor Center. The first week in October should be a great time for vagrants in the Reserve area. Great trip for all levels of birders.

From the Bay Area take Hwy. 101 south from San Jose. After the town of San Martin and before Gilroy, exit west on Hwy. 152 going toward Watsonville. From Watsonville, take G12 (Salinas Rd.) south to Elkhorn Road to the Reserve's Visitor's Center.

[\$]

Hawk Hill


Marin

Sunday, October 5

Leader: Stefanie Arthur, 415.587.9282

Meet at 10 a.m. at the platform with the wing-span diagrams. Hawk Hill, in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, is the premier hawk watch location in the West. Each fall, about 20,000 hawks fly over Hawk Hill and over 200 volunteers engage in hawk counting, banding, telemetry and other research programs. Enjoy the majesty of the various species of hawks that migrate through the Bay Area with Golden Gate Raptor Observatory Day Leader Stefanie Arthur. Bring lunch and liquids, sunscreen, hat. Layered clothing advisable. Trip will end around 2 p.m.

Coming from Marin County, take the last exit before Golden Gate bridge. Turn left at stop sign, then right into the GGNRA, on Conzelman Rd. Drive to top of hill and park. Walk up to Hawk Hill via the gated fire road. From San Francisco, take the first exit after the bridge which is Alexander. Turn left, drive under the freeway. Turn left and then right into the GGNRA. You will be on Conzelman Rd. Parking limited so come early and carpool if possible.

 East Bay Drivers/riders meet at
9 a.m. at North Berkeley BART.

Strybing Arboretum

San Francisco

Sundays, October 5 and November 2

GGAS co-leaders: Allan Ridley, Rick Ferrick;
Strybing Arboretum Docents:
Helen McKenna, Linda Lyons
415.566.3241

Meet at 8 a.m. at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way) for this regular first Sunday of the month half-day trip. See September *Gull* for details.

Coyote Hills Regional Park

Fremont

Saturday, October 18

Leader: Rusty Scalf,
510.666.9936, Rscalf@jps.net

Meet at 8 a.m. in the first parking lot on the left (beyond the fee booth.) This is a unique park with fresh water and salt pond habitat. We should see ducks, waders and much more. Bring lunch and liquids. Beginners welcome.

From the East Bay take I-880 south to Rt. 84/Dumbarton Bridge exit. Turn right and continue west. Exit on Paseo Padre Pkwy. Turn right and continue north one mile, left on Patterson Ranch Rd. to Coyote Hills.

Lake Merced Bird Walk

San Francisco

Saturday, October 18

Leader: David Armstrong, 415.305.7681(c),
darmstrong99@yahoo.com

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the concrete bridge on South Lake Merced. We will bird various locations on and around Lake Merced, covering up to 5 miles of flat terrain on foot. Wear good walking shoes and bring water. Trip ends at around noon. Group limited to 12 participants; please reserve with leader.

The concrete bridge is accessed on John Muir Dr. approx. 1/4 miles NW of the intersection of John Muir Dr. and Lake Merced Blvd.



Carpool. If you can share a ride
or if you need a ride, call
Susan Groves at 510.654.5954.

[\$] **Entrance fee** required.

Wednesdays At The Marsh

Arrowhead Marsh, Alameda County

Wednesday, October 22

Leader: Courtenay Peddle, 510.532.8911
(no calls after 9 p.m.), capeddle@there.net

Meet at 9:30 a.m. for a 2-1/2 hour stroll. We should see lots of shorebirds and perhaps Clapper Rail. Bring scope if you have one. All levels of birders welcome.

Take I-880 south to Hegenberger and then west on Hegenberger to Doolittle Drive. Right on Doolittle, right onto Swan Way. Left into the park. Drive to end for Arrowhead Marsh parking lot.

Sixteenth Annual Point Reyes National Seashore All-Day Birding Blitz

Point Reyes

Saturday, October 25

Leader: Leon Abrams,
415.453.9980 (w), 510.843.4107 (h)

A joint activity sponsored by GGAS and National Park Service.

Meet at 8 a.m. at Five Brooks Trailhead parking lot (about 3.5 miles south of Olema on Hwy. 1). This fast-paced multi-habitat trip covers the Five Brooks Pond area, Limantour Spit, Drakes Beach, Chimney Rock and Point Reyes, ending at Bear Valley, producing approximately 100 species. Bring food, water, and layered clothing for variable weather.

Arrowhead Marsh

Alameda County

Sunday, October 26

Leaders: Michael Butler, 510.526.2898,
mjbkl@earthlink.com and Pamela Llewellyn,
510.843.7904, pllewellyn@kleinfelder.com

Meet at 9 a.m. for this half-day trip featuring shorebirds, ducks, raptors, Clapper Rail and more. Beginners welcome.

Call Susan Groves, Field Trips
Committee Chair, at 510.654.5954:

- if you have difficulty reaching a leader and need information,
- if you have suggestions for trips, or
- if you are interested in leading a trip.

From Berkeley take 880 south and exit at Hegenberger Rd. Turn right onto Hegenberger and right on Edgewater. We will congregate at the East Bay Regional Parks Garretson Point parking lot at the end of Edgewater.

Aquatic Park

San Francisco

Sunday, October 26

415.561.7100 or 561.7104

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the foot of the Hyde Street Pier (Hyde & Jefferson) for this beginners bird walk. Discover birds next door to the urban environment. San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park Ranger Carol Kiser will lead this approximately two-hour walk. Dress in layers. Trip is wheelchair accessible.



Juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk

Siobhan Ruck

Birding and Wildlife Adventure "Down Under"

In the fall of 2004, some lucky GGAS members will be leaving for a birding and wildlife tour sponsored by Golden Gate Audubon Society and led by George Peyton, who also led GGAS' very successful Safari to East Africa this past November.

Australia is a true birder's paradise, since so many of the species are either brightly colored, relatively large, or otherwise exotic, and almost all of the birds you will see are very different from those in the United States. In addition, with so many unique marsupials, ranging from kangaroos to the duck-billed platypus to koalas, there is an incredible amount to see and absorb.

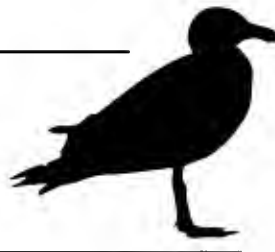


Our tour will be in the Australian spring, so many wildflowers and flowering plants will be evident, and birds and wildlife will be more active than usual. The main tour will be during the first two weeks of October, and will cover the Sydney Area; Cairns, the Atherton Tablelands, Daintree, and the Great Barrier Reef in the Northeast; Brisbane, Lamington National Park, and O'Reilly's Guest House on the Central East Coast; and the Melbourne Area and into the edge of the Outback at the end. There will be a pre-trip to Darwin and Kakadu National Park on the North Coast, and Alice Springs and Ayers Rock in the "Red Center," while a post-trip is scheduled to Tasmania.

Anyone interested should call George Peyton (who has visited Australia four times in the past) at 510.433.2609 on weekdays or write him at 440 Grizzly Peak Blvd., Berkeley, CA 94708.

OBSERVATIONS

August 1–31, 2003
Bruce Mast



Bird reports were predictably light in August, as the breeding season wound down. Many species go into molt about this time and become especially reclusive while their flying abilities are compromised. Most reports of unusual bird sightings were from coastal and bay shore locations, where the fall migration of shorebirds got underway in earnest.

Loons to Ducks

We begin this month's column with a species that was *not* reported in August: Arctic Loon. A late July report of a probable Arctic Loon in flight near Abbott's Lagoon (PRNS, MRN) sent bird watchers scurrying to the coast, scopes in hand. Numerous reports came in of a loon showing Arctic's characteristic white flanks. But photos of the bird showed a flightless loon with no primary feathers—a molting Common Loon.

Perhaps the most remarkable bird of the period, the Aug 9 pelagic trip out of Bodega Bay, SON, had stunning views of a **Cory's Shearwater** (*Calonectris diomedea*) near the Cordell Bank (DSH; mob). This oceanic specialist is fairly typical over North Atlantic and Mediterranean waters but has never been recorded alive in the Pacific Ocean (fidé LC). Less remarkable but far easier to see, an Ashy Storm-Petrel put in an unusual bayside appearance on 10 Aug near Johnson's Landing, Hayward RS, ALA (BR). That same day, a **Brown Booby** (*Sula leucogaster*), described as having adult female-type plumage, made landfall at the Farallon Islands, SF (PP).

Several noteworthy long-legged waders graced us with their presence in August. On the 30th, a Sacramento Audubon field trip found a Least Bittern at the Fish Docks (PRNS, MRN) both out of range and out of habitat (CC; mob). Two White-faced Ibis sightings were reported this month. The first, on Aug 24, was tentatively identified as White-faced as it flew over Bodega Bay, MRN (RM). The second, on 31 Aug, in-

cluded 3 individuals at Arrowhead Marsh, ALA (BM, AL).

A Ross's Goose, a typical winter visitor to Central Valley wildlife refuges, made an early appearance on 17 Aug at San Lorenzo Community Park, ALA (BR). Another early winter visitor, a Ring-necked Duck, turned up on the 30th at Año Nuevo SP, SM (PM; JM, DSi). The 2 summering Harlequin Ducks described in last month's column continued through August at PRNS, MRN (mob), and at Coyote Pt Yacht Club, SM (RT; DH, MH). Typically a rare winter visitor, a Long-tailed Duck was reported on



Loggerhead Shrike

10 Aug as having spent the previous month molting his wings at the Farallon Islands, SF (PP). Ending the list of duck sightings, loon hunters at Abbott's Lagoon (PRNS, MRN) on 1 Aug found an early Common Goldeneye as a consolation prize (DB, PB).

Raptors to Alcids

Hawk migration typically heats up in September and October. But in August, intrepid watchers were already scanning the horizon from Hawk Hill, MRN. On the 23rd, they were rewarded with a distant Swainson's Hawk that headed northeast (that's not the

way to Argentina!) and out of sight (SB; mob). The following day, an early juvenile Ferruginous Hawk came over Hawk Hill, crossed the gate and made landfall a little northeast of Baker Beach, SF (SB; mob). On Aug 7, 7 Common Moorhens of 3 different age groups were at Five Brooks, PRNS, MRN (RS). As reported last month, a Moorhen pair successfully raised 2 broods at that site this summer.

August shorebird sightings were both numerous and varied. On the 25th, a Golden-Plover (sp.), showing remnant alternate plumage on its underparts, flew high overhead near Redwood Shores, headed toward Foster City (RT). On 29 Aug, a juvenile **Hudsonian Godwit** (*Limosa haemastica*) turned up in Alviso, SCL (DMA; mob). A second bird was found the next day at the same location (JL; mob). These birds are the third and fourth records for SCL, and the second and third records for Alviso. Statewide, 18 records have been accepted by the CBRC. Hundreds of Red Knots were reported at high tide on 7 Aug at Hayward RS (ALA) (MR). Scattered Knot reports also came in from other coastal and North Bay locations.

Schollenberger Park, in Petaluma, SON, was host to a Semipalmated Sandpiper on 31 Aug (RM). The park was also the preferred destination for a Baird's Sandpiper, seen on the 26th (DAs). The last half of the month, birders submitted 5 additional reports of Baird's from around the region: at Abbott's Lagoon, MRN (KB); at Bolinas Lagoon, MRN (LL); at Ocean Beach, SF (AG); at Moss Beach, SM (RT; JM, DSi); and 3 birds at Año Nuevo SP, SM (PM). In the South Bay, a Stilt Sandpiper paid a visit to the New Chicago Marsh in Alviso, SCL, on 21 Aug (BRI). A Ruff was reported from the same location on the 10th (CL) and again on the 21st (BRI). Closing out the shorebird category this month, a number of observers reported Wilson's Phalaropes and Red-necked Phalaropes seemed to be present at virtually every body of water bigger than a puddle.

Sometimes numerous over deep ocean during migration but decidedly rare on land, a molting adult Sabine's Gull loitered at Año Nuevo SP, SM, the 30th and 31st (PM; JM, DSi). On Aug 3, an observer distinguished a juvenile Elegant Tern among the Caspian Terns at Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS, MRN (MB).

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

On the 14th, approximately 200 Elegant Terns were seen resting on the Emeryville Crescent mudflats, ALA (BP). Back at Abbott's Lagoon (last month's unequivocal hot spot), the Caspian Tern flock was joined by a Common Tern on 28 Aug (RS). Least Terns were reported from various Bay locations in August, with a high count of 60 at Hayward RS, ALA, on 7 Aug (MR). An Aug 23 report from the Napa-Solano Marsh Wildlife Area (near Vallejo, SOL) represented the greatest distance from the Least Tern breeding colony at the former Alameda NAS (AW; CDL).

Marbled Murrelets were reported from coastal waters on multiple occasions but a rare inland bird was found swimming just offshore at Hayward RS, ALA, on 9 Aug. (DB, PB). The only other alcid of note, the Aug 9 pelagic trip out of Bodega Bay, SON, had a Xantus's Murrelet (DSh; mob).

Doves to Thrashers

On Aug 11, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo was found near the Kehoe Ranch at PRNS, MRN. It had a brood-patch and was identified as a member of the western sub-species (PP). Yellow-billed Cuckoos have nearly disappeared from the West as their preferred nesting habitat along riparian corridors has been destroyed. An unusual Bay Area visitor, a Lesser Night-hawk was found on 17 Aug, sitting on a fence

post near Hayward RS, ALA (BR). Taking a break from their raptor studies, hawk watchers at Hawk Hill, MRN, reported a pair of Black Swifts flying over on 24 Aug (SB; mob). The latter half of the month produced at least 4 Willow Flycatcher reports, including sightings at Sebastopol, SON (LH); PRNS, MRN (CC); and Lincoln Park, SF (HC, BF). On or before Aug 10, an intrepid (or lost) Loggerhead Shrike made it out to the Farallon Islands, SF (PP). Finally, Purple Martins were reported from 5 locations in MRN, 2 in SM, and 1 in ALA (mob). The high count was approximately 20 individuals on Aug 7, reported from the Bear Valley Visitor's Center at PRNS, MRN, where a colony has been roosting (RS).

Wood Warblers to Finches

Vagrant wood warblers were few and far between in August. Western MRN produced a Lucy's Warbler, a Northern Parula, and a Blackpoll Warbler. American Redstarts showed up at 3 different locations in SF and SM at the end of the month. Otherwise, there was little action.

Sparrow action was equally light. On 21 Aug, a Great-Basin type Brewer's Sparrow was identified at PRNS, MRN (RS). Also at PRNS, several Grasshopper Sparrows were in the grass along the bluff east of Abbott's Lagoon on 3 Aug (MB).

Wood Warbler Sightings

Lucy's Warbler

Aug 15 Bolinas, MRN KH

Northern Parula

7 Aug Brooks Pond, PRNS, RS
MRN

Blackpoll Warbler

31 Aug PRNS Lighthouse, MRN KR

American Redstart

30 Aug GGP, SF DM
30 Aug Moss Beach, SM RT
31 Aug Pescadero Cr., SM RT

Abbreviations for Observers: DA, David Armstrong; DAs, Dick Ashford; DB, Dennis Braddy; KB, Ken Burton; MB, Matt Brady; PB, Patricia Braddy; SB, Steve Bauer; CC, Chris Conard; HC, Hugh Cotter; JC, Josiah Clark; JCo, Judi Cooper; LC, Les Chibana; LCo, Luke Cole; ADM, Al DeMartini; GD, Gary Deghi; JD, Jim Danzenbaker; AE, Al Eisner; BF, Brian Fitch; HF, Hary Fuller; MF, Mike Feighner; RF, Rich Ferrick; AG, Arlene Gemmill; SG, Steve Glover; AH, Alan Hopkins; DH, Dave Haveman; KH, Keith Hansen; LH, Lisa Hug; MH, Merry Haveman; SH, Steve Huckabone; AJ, Alvaro Jaramillo; AL, Arthur Lyons; CL, Cindy Lieurance; CDL, Calvin Lou; DL, Don Lewis; JL, John Luther; LL, Les Lieurance; RL, Rick Lebaudour; RLn, Robin Leong; BM, Bob Mendel; DM, Dan Murphy; DMa, Dean Manley; JM, Joe Morlan; PM, Peter Metropulos; RM, Roger Marlowe; KO, Kris Olson; BP, Bob Power; JP, John Poole; PP, Peter Pyle; BR, Bob Richmond; BRI, Bob Reiling; JR, Jean Richmond; KR, Kathy Robertson; MR, Mark Rauzon; DS, David Suddjian; DSh, Debbie Shearwater; DSi, Dan Singer; ES, Emilie Strauss; PS, Paul Saraceni; RS, Rich Stallcup; RSc, Rusty Scaif; FT, Francis Toldi; RT, Ron Thom; MU, Myra Ulvang; DVP, David Vander Pluym; AW, Alan Wight; AWi, Adam Winer; DW, Denise Wight

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers; "ooh" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listers; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions.

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; BBA, Breeding Bird Atlas; CBC, Christmas Bird Count; CC, Contra Costa; Cr, Creek; Cyn, Canyon; GGP, Golden Gate Park; L, Lake; MRN, Marin; MTY, Monterey; N., North; NAP, Napa; NAS, Naval Air Station; Pt, Point; PRNS, Point Reyes National Seashore; ; RP, Regional Park; Rd, Road; Res, Reservoir; RS, Regional Shoreline; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SR, State Reserve

SAVING QUAIL, continued from page 1

GGAS' Save the Quail campaign aims to save the existing population by creating new habitat in the areas where quail once thrived. These areas will support remaining quail populations and allow reintroduction of captive bred birds in one of the most ambitious bird restoration projects in Northern California.

Although both the City of San Francisco and the National Park Service have native habitat restoration programs, GGAS' Save the Quail campaign is unique in focusing on the twin goals of saving declining quail populations and restoring native plant communities in the City. And the campaign has met with significant success.

Working with the Presidio Trust, GGAS has turned a large ice-plant-covered lot off Battery Caulfield Road in the Presidio into prime quail habitat. Volunteers removed ice plant and planted 4,500 native plants. Now known as Quail Commons, the area is being used by quail as a primary wintering area. This summer, three quail families raised broods in the Commons. Many other at-risk species are now using the area as well.

While GGAS efforts have made a difference, more work needs to be done to bring back quail to the Presidio and other areas of the City. At Lake Merced, GGAS is working with the San Francisco Recreation & Park Department to create new habitat at Harding Park golf course, where we hope the birds will recover naturally or through re-introduction.

How You Can Help

Join us in making history. Use the form on page 11 to join the Quail Restore-A-Thon team or sponsor a volunteer. Help us "Save the Quail" in San Francisco.

by Alan Hopkins

Save the Quail Program Coordinator

Christmas Bird Count Dates

Mark your calendars now! The Oakland Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sunday, December 14, 2003. The San Francisco Count will be held Tuesday, December 30. Details will be in next month's *Gull*.

BACKYARD BIRDER

Meg Pauletich



Even novice birders can identify a hummingbird. For generations, these beauties have captivated us with their brilliant, iridescent colors and their effervescent personalities. They are tiny but fiercely territorial, seemingly friendly and unafraid of humans, and energetic bundles of joy. Some sentimental ornithologists gave them whimsical names such as coquette, kiss flower, sun angel, sun beam, wood nymph, comet and woodstar. The name hummingbird actually refers to the sound of their wings “humming.”

According to Sibley's Field Guide, there are 18 species of hummingbirds in North America. In the eastern part of the U. S. only the Ruby-Throated is found. This tiny, 3-gram-sized bird migrates over 500 miles across the Gulf of Mexico to spend the winter in Mexico. It reverses the trip to summer state side. In California we are fortunate to have the Anna's all year round and the smaller Allen's who spends its summer with us. During migration this spring, my friend's flowering chestnut tree attracted the Caliope, Black-chinned, Rufous and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds all in one hour! Arizona, New Mexico and Texas have a large selection of beauties, including a few who may cross the Mexican border to thrill us.

When we visited Costa Rica, we saw more than a dozen different species. The most amazing was the well-named Bee Hummingbird, which I mistook for an insect tasting the flowers. I read of another case of nature copying nature—an observer thought he had discovered a pale, nocturnal hummingbird which turned out to be a Hummingbird moth! Other tropical hummingbirds are quite large. The San Diego Zoo has some stunning examples in their aviary.

Masters of flight, hummers can hover in midair, fly backwards as well as vertically and horizontally, and have been clocked by motorists at up to 60 MPH for short bursts. Their huge chest muscles support their long,

narrow wings, which beat up to 80 times per second. Using their broad, stiff tails as a rudder, they can change direction in an instant. However, their tiny feet and legs are useless for hopping or walking and can only perch. They share this trait with their order-mates, the swift family.

Hummingbirds love nectar from flowers. They are attracted to bright colors, especially red. While browsing flowers, they also savor spiders, and they can even snatch insects from the air. It is not true that they use their tongues as straws. Instead, when probing flowers the brush-like tip of the tongue col-



Black-chinned Hummingbird

lects nectar and pumps it along the tongue with the aid of capillary action.

My dream is to have the metabolism of a hummingbird, which is the second fastest in the animal world after the shrew. Imagine being able to eat constantly with no fear of gaining weight! The downside is that with such a small crop to store food (remember, they need to be light to fly), they run the risk of running out of fuel. This is why you might be able to pick up an exhausted hummingbird if it has become trapped in your house

or garage. Usually it will recover quickly and fly off to feed. If not, a few drops of sugar water could save its life.

At night, in order to save energy, hummingbirds drop their temperature, reduce their breathing rate and heartbeat and become torpid. (Their relatives, swifts and nightjars, can do the same thing.) In the bird world, hummingbird hearts are the largest relative to body weight. The heart beats 250 times per minute when at rest and up to 1,000 beats when flying! At daylight, the torpid bird's functions return to normal and it whips into action, feeding almost continuously. When you see hummingbirds perch, they are digesting their food. They are also on guard, watching to ensure no interloper tries to feed from “their” feeder or flowers. The female with young guards her food sources. The male shares none of the parental duties but is always looking for a new female and is interested in preserving his breeding grounds. This is when the male “sings” his series of squeaks and high-pitched twitters before launching into fantastic loop-the-loops guaranteed to impress the little ladies.

Hummingbirds themselves are irresistible; their nests are simply cunning. Generally, they nest in a tiny cup of lichen (plant flakes) bound together with spider silk and lined with thistle or milkweed down. Its perfect location and small size disguise it well. The one to three eggs are white ovals about the size of a dried bean. To see a mother plunging her long bill down the baby's throat is frightening; however, the babies seem to survive this probing method of feeding and take off after a month or so.

If you would like to attract these charmers to your yard or deck, dissolve 1 part sugar in 4 parts water (do NOT use honey). Don't buy a large feeder since the mixture must be very fresh. Make sure the feeder is easy to clean and refill. If you have room, plant some easy-to-care-for native plants like sage or lavender or even petunias, impatiens or fuchsias. Like all birds, hummers enjoy water: a sprinkler for running through on hot days, a fountain where they can surf or sip, or a bird bath. Sit back, relax and watch the Star Wars between rivals begin!

National Audubon Society

Save the Date to Save the Quail

Once numerous in San Francisco's parks, the charismatic California Quail is now on the verge of extinction in the City. But you can help. Join Golden Gate Audubon Society's Save the Quail campaign and help us restore healthy California Quail populations in San Francisco.

On Saturday, November 15, 2003, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., GGAS will hold the first-ever Save the Quail "Restore-A-Thon" in San Francisco. Unlike other "thons" where people walk, run, bike, or count birds, Save the Quail Restore-A-Thon participants will create quail habitat around the newly renovated Harding Park golf course and in the Presidio and help to raise funds for Golden Gate Audubon Society's Save the Quail campaign. All funds raised will be used to support GGAS' Save the Quail campaign, which includes direct habitat restoration efforts, outreach, education and advocacy to restore quail in San Francisco, and other conservation efforts, such as the initiation of a captive-breeding program.

Volunteers will work in two sites. At Harding Park Golf Course, our brand-new quail habitat restoration site, you'll be digging, plant-



ing and watering quail-friendly plants around the golf course. At the Presidio, volunteers will work in or near the current GGAS restoration site at Quail Commons, on the fairly strenuous tasks of removing ice plant and other weeds. Volunteers will also find less strenuous tasks at both sites.

You don't need to be an expert birder or have a green thumb to join the Restore-A-Thon. People of all ages and skill levels are welcome. Tasks will vary from light to vigorous, including weeding, planting, watering and assisting GGAS staff with restoration and education efforts. At the end of the day, everyone will enjoy food, prizes, and relaxing in good company.

Other Ways to Help

No time to volunteer? Show your appreciation and support of the GGAS Save the Quail campaign by sponsoring a Restore-A-Thon volunteer! Every dollar means a greater chance for the survival of the California Quail in San Francisco. Or contact the GGAS office to find out other ways to volunteer or support Golden Gate Audubon Society.

Save the Quail Restore-A-Thon

Saturday, November 15, 2003

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

- ☐ **Yes!** I will help save San Francisco's quail by participating in these ways:
- ☐ I can work _____ hours at \$ _____ per hour (maximum 4 hours).
 - ☐ I will find other people to sponsor me.
 - ☐ I will join the Harding Park work party.
 - or
 - ☐ I will join the Presidio work party.
 - ☐ I would like to sponsor a Restore-A-Thon team member.
 - ☐ Please choose a volunteer for me @ \$ _____ per hour for 4 hours
 - ☐ I will sponsor _____ @ \$ _____ per hour for 4 hours
FIRST NAME LAST NAME
 - ☐ I can't participate in the Restore-A-Thon but want to help! Enclosed is a check to **Golden Gate Audubon Society** for \$ _____
 - ☐ I want to join Golden Gate Audubon Society's conservation team and help save other Bay Area wildlife. Please send me information about how I can volunteer.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____



Mail to:
Golden Gate Audubon Society
2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G
Berkeley, CA 94702

waterbirds to conserve the energy they need to complete their yearly migration to the Arctic and back. Without sufficient calories, birds may fail to reproduce when they reach their nesting grounds in the Arctic.

Recent research indicates that ducks, geese, grebes, and other waterbirds respond negatively to boat traffic. If a boat approaches a group of ducks resting on the water, the birds will probably fly off (flush). But every time a roosting duck is flushed, it expends energy it can't afford to lose. When boats repeatedly pass the same location, birds may leave that area permanently. If a site becomes unusable for waterfowl due to boat traffic, the birds may be deprived of their best available roosting or feeding habitat.

In addition to interrupting natural feeding and roosting behavior, WTA's proposed ferry plan also threatened other impacts to Bay wildlife. Proposed new ferry terminals at Port Sonoma in San Pablo Bay, Alviso in the South Bay, and Fremont in the East Bay would require significant dredging and have

ferries passing through great expanses of wetlands that provide habitat for endangered species as well as sites where harbor seals haul out. Another proposed terminal site—Gilman Street on the Berkeley/Albany border—would divide the newly created Eastshore State Park in half and could significantly impact waterbirds. Environmentalists strongly suggested the Berkeley Marina as a preferable site.

Alarmed by these potentially devastating impacts, GGAS, the Sierra Club and other groups expressed concern to the WTA.

In an unprecedented collaborative process, the WTA responded by offering to find common ground that would allay conservationists' concerns while moving forward with a revitalized Bay ferry system. Working closely with the WTA staff, GGAS and its partners convinced the authority to address our issues.

As a result, the WTA's revised plan, as defined in its Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) which was certified and released in August 2003, greatly reduces

the size of the ferry system and thus its impacts on roosting waterbirds. The WTA has eliminated Alviso, Fremont, and Port Sonoma as potential terminal sites. Gilman Street is still included as a potential terminal site, but the PEIR identifies the Berkeley Marina as an alternative East Bay location and stipulates that further environmental review is required before Gilman can be selected. The WTA agreed to monitor impacts on waterbirds and to provide mitigations if the monitoring shows harm to ducks and geese. Mitigations include seeking alternate routes or, if this is not feasible, creating new waterfowl habitat in the Bay.

As a result of our efforts, we anticipate that a new ferry system will have far fewer environmental impacts than originally proposed. We have rarely seen an agency act so responsively to environmental issues, and we express our appreciation to the WTA and its staff for their sensitivity.

by Arthur Feinstein
Director of Conservation & Education

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As a member of National Audubon Society, you are automatically enrolled in the local chapter, Golden Gate Audubon Society. Chapter benefits include receipt of *The Gull*, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Call the GGAS office at 510.843.2222 if you have any questions.

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